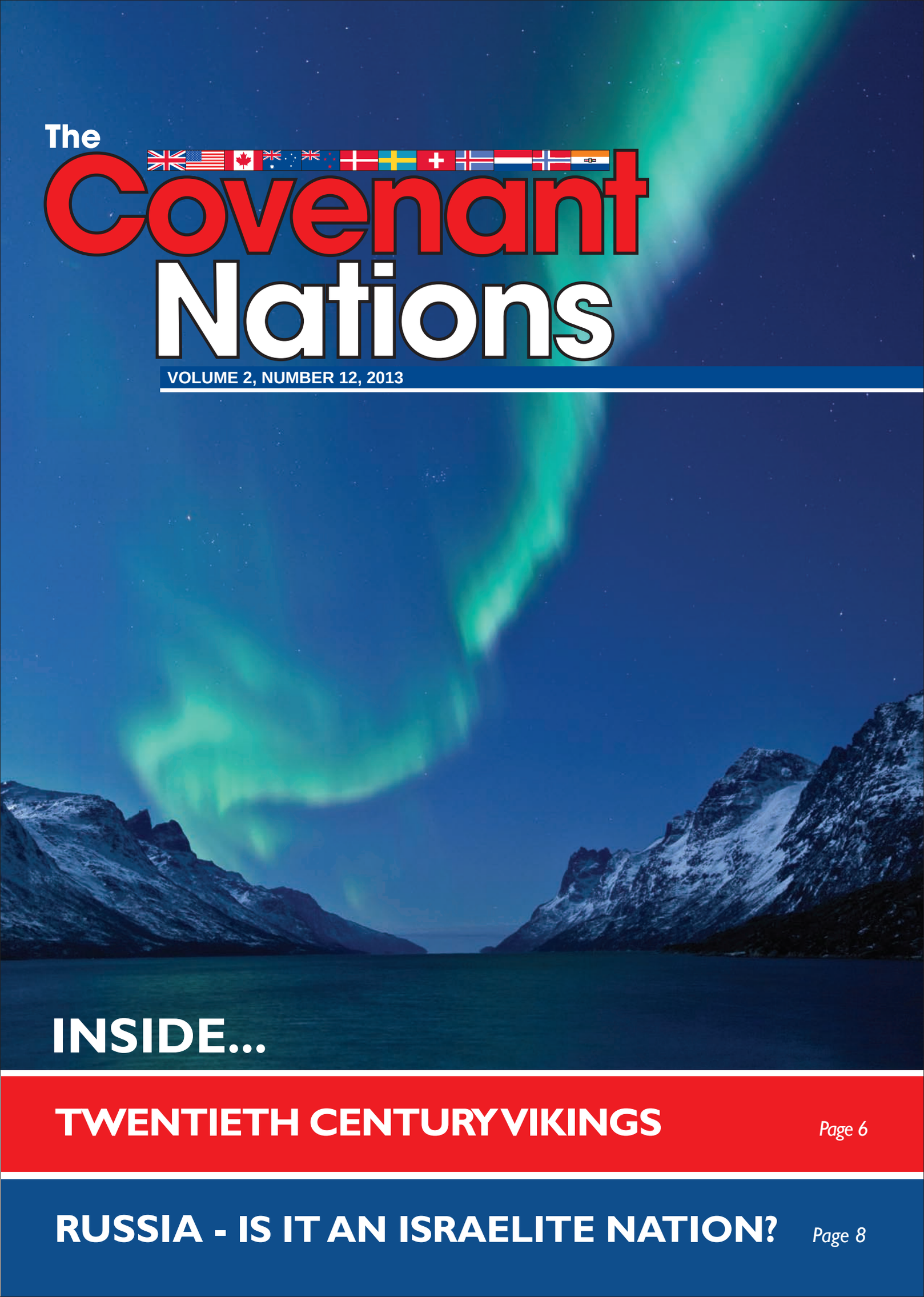

The Covenant Nations

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▲ *The Light of the World* by Holman Hunt. There will be an article on the artist's studies in preparation for this painting in a future issue.

◄ COVER PICTURE: The northern lights or aurora borealis as seen in countries near to the Arctic Circle.

Join us in the Great Cause to Wake Up God's Covenant Nations!

The Covenant Nations

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EDITORIAL STAFF

Michael A Clark
Ernest S Gage
David J Aimer
Philippa M Clark
Kathleen D Gage

HEAD OFFICE

The British-Israel-World Federation
Telephone: 01388 834395
E-mail: admin@britishisrael.co.uk
Web: www.britishisrael.co.uk

The Covenant Publishing Co Ltd
Telephone: 01388 835753
E-mail: admin@covpub.co.uk
Web: www.covpub.co.uk

The National Bible College
Telephone: 01388 834395
Email: admin@tnbc.org.uk
Web: www.tnbc.org.uk

121 Low Etherley, Bishop Auckland DL14 0HA
United Kingdom

OVERSEAS OFFICES

Australia

BIWF in NSW Ltd, PO Box 76, Ungarie, NSW, 2669
Telephone: +61 (0) 45800 0383

BIWF (Queensland) Inc., 41 Kirikee Street, Ferny Grove, Queensland, 4055
Telephone: +61 (0) 3851 2697
E-mail: micdor1@optusnet.com.au

BIWF (Victoria) Inc., PO Box 596, Camberwell, Victoria, 3124
Telephone: +61 (0) 39882 4256
+61 (0) 39882 8643

New Zealand

BIWF (NZ) Auckland Inc., PO Box 56-142, Dominion Road, Mount Eden, Auckland, 1024
Telephone: (09) 630 0982
E-mail: biwf@xtra.co.nz

Canada

BIWF (Canada) Inc., 313 Sherbourne Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 2S3
Telephone: (416) 921 5996
E-mail: british-israel@bellnet.ca
Web: www.british-israel-world-fed.ca

Canadian British-Israel Association, 500 Tecumseh Rd. E., Box 28047, Windsor, Ontario, N8X 5E4
Telephone: 1-800-919-8819
E-mail: staff@israelite.ca
Web: www.israelite.ca

The Netherlands

Bond Netherlands Israel
Postbus 30009, 1303 AA Almere
Telephone: 036 5296956

South Africa

South African Office - Mrs A Fromburg
PO Box 2565, Port Alfred, 6170
Telephone: +27 (0) 46 6243342

USA

BIWF-USA, (also The Covenant Publishing Company of North America) 405 West Searcy Street, Heber Springs, Arkansas, 72543, USA
Telephone: 501 362 5299
Fax: 501 362 5312
E-mail: biwfusa@sbcglobal.net
covpubna@sbcglobal.net
Web: www.biwf-usa.com

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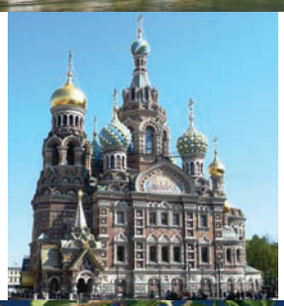

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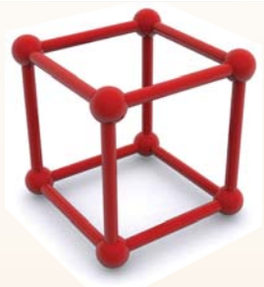

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Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in the articles are generally well-researched and considered. However, they do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.

The Israel Blessing

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

"Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying,
'On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel,
saying unto them,
'The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:
The LORD make His face shine upon thee, and
be gracious unto thee:
The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee,
and give thee peace.' '
And they shall put My name upon the children
of Israel; and I will bless them."

Numbers 6:22-27

EDITORIAL

HOLY RUSSIA IN THE 21st CENTURY –

A new national identity based on Orthodox Christian values

Vladimir Putin, the Russian president, has set out foundation principles that this great nation must now follow and in a most surprising way, considering the long nightmare the country experienced under the former atheistic Soviet Union. On 19 September Mr Putin called on Russians to strengthen a new national identity on conservative traditional values such as the Orthodox Church, warning that the West was facing a moral crisis.

Church of St. Nicholas, Kiev

Reporting from Valdai, Russia, for the *Financial Times*, Neil Buckley stated that Mr Putin's comments came in a three-hour appearance at the annual Valdai Club meeting of specially invited academics and journalists following calls in the west for a boycott of the February 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi because of a Russian law banning promotion of homosexuality.

"Sovereignty, independence, the integrity of Russia – these are red lines that no one is allowed to cross," the Russian president warned. Mr Putin said Russia should avoid the example of European countries that were "going away from their roots," by legalizing gay marriage and excessive "political correctness."

"A policy is being conducted of putting on the same level multi-child families and single-sex partnerships, belief in God and belief in Satan. The excesses of political correctness are leading to the point where people are talking seriously about registering parties whose goal is legalising the propaganda of paedophilia," Mr Putin claimed.

The speech reflected Mr Putin's shift to a more conservative stance since he returned as president last year, a move appropriately designed to appeal to grassroots supporters outside Russia's cities. It is more than a political irony that the president of Russia is making a stand against homosexuality and protecting children in their education on this issue, admonishing the West as to its moral declension.

The leadership of the covenant nations does not like this at all and the anger expressed towards Mr Putin surely reveals a strong conviction of sin. Is it possible that Russia could yet perform an important role in revealing the Kingdom truth to a sin stricken Western World that is devoid of prophetic vision and leadership in righteousness which only can exalt a nation?

The article on page 8 of this issue contains a fascinating reflection on how much the Russians have restored their magnificent historic churches in recent years and the possibility of the people of western Russia in particular having a strong link with the migrating Israelite tribe of Gad. The characteristic of this tribe was that of leading a troop in battle and the Cossacks in their role as a buffer against Tatar raids are evidence of this. One might well reflect here on the expression "by Gad sir" which has long been characteristic of the British Army.

According to the legends, Christianity was first brought to the territory of modern Belarus, Russia and the Ukraine by Saint Andrew, the first Apostle of Jesus Christ. He travelled over the Black Sea to the Greek colony of Cheronesus Taurica in the Crimea, where he turned several thousands of men to the new faith. Following the Dnieper river, allegedly he travelled north where Kiev would be founded around the fifth century and as far north as the future location of Veliky Novgorod.

Askold's Grave, around the Church of St Nicholas illustrated above, is a historical park on the steep right bank of the Dnieper River in Kiev.

The Christian history of Russia is a fascinating one and 2013 marks the 1,025th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia in AD 988. It is a Christian nation that overcame a turbulent and horrific past and Christians in Russia have survived a literal fury from Hell during the communism era. The 400th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty took place on 12 July this year, the family of which was murdered by the Bolsheviks on 17 July 1918. The relationship of the Romanovs with the British Royal Family was undoubtedly a link to the royal line of Judah. We will need to study Holy Russia far more in the days ahead.

TWENTIETH CENTURY VIKINGS

This article is taken from Our Israel Allies *by The Rev Ansley F Rash published by The Covenant Publishing Company. The author stated 'my grateful thanks are due to The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Information.' No date was given for this publication but it is likely to have been immediately after the Second World War, 1945.*

Before the outbreak of war a great deal of ignorance existed among British Israelites about our brethren on the Continent of Europe. Just as the Jews are not all Israel, so the British, although the majority, are not all Israel. As united Israel is to build the Kingdom of God upon the earth, and usher in the new world order, it is time that we considered the matter a little more carefully than hitherto.

It is our privilege as Ephraim, the birthright tribe, the nation and company of nations, to act as host at this time to large numbers of our brethren and to many strangers from afar; to offer to them the shelter and protection of the Throne of David. Thus shall we fulfil our mission and invite others to share with us the security of this tight little island, this precious stone set in a silver sea, to which God has been a wall of fire round about and the glory in the midst.

Even in the turmoil of this terrible tragedy which has engulfed the whole world, God is working His purpose out by uniting the Israel people in preparation for the return of His Son to take the throne and reign.

Who are the brethren whom our forefather Jacob blessed with ourselves, and whence came they? I am going to write of a gallant people whose links with Britain, racially and culturally, are as strong as any in the world. They are the people who dwell in that lovely country so aptly described as 'the land of the Midnight Sun.'

Mention of Norway immediately conjures up visions of the hardy Vikings in their longships sailing to the uttermost parts of the earth. We recall how a band of Northmen led by Leif Eiriksson discovered America in AD 1000, four hundred years before the appearance of the Genoese Columbus. In his book *Northmen of Adventure* Charles Marshall Smith tells how the Asar, led by Odin, who was later deified by the Norsemen, left their home at Asgard on the east bank of the Don, migrated northward through Russia to the shores of the Baltic and finally crossed into Scandinavia. He also points out that the most reliable historian of those early days, Snorri Sturlason of Iceland, informs us that these Asar people were fair-headed, blue-eyed and big-bodied, a strong and dominant race mentally and physically.

Students of British-Israel identity will note the similarity between Asgard and Arsareth, where the Ten Tribes were last heard of after throwing off the Assyrian yoke.* Another interesting point worth mentioning is that one of the signs of the Nordic culture was the perforated battle-axe, and the finest specimens of this weapon come from the two extremities of Europe. They were the handiwork of the Northmen of Scandinavia and the heroes who fought at Troy. Students of Israel identity will also remember that Brutus the Trojan who laid the foundations of the City of London was a great-grandson of Zarah, son of Judah.

It is, of course, quite impossible in a short article to deal with the long history of the Norwegian people or to dwell at any length upon the influence they have exerted in past days upon the life and destiny of the British race. We must concern ourselves now with the last two centuries.

Inspired by the French revolutionaries' concepts of freedom, and modelled on the American Constitution, the Norwegian Constitution drawn up on 17 May, 1814, lays down that 'the Kingdom of Norway is a free, independent, indivisible and inalienable Kingdom. Its form of Government is a limited and hereditary monarchy. The Evangelical Lutheran religion is the public religion of the nation. The inhabitants professing it are required to bring up their children in the same. The executive power is vested in the King, the legislative power in the Storting, and the judicial power in the Judicature.' Two important general provisions in the Constitution are, firstly, that no person can be imprisoned without a trial, and, secondly, there shall be unlicensed printing and freedom of the press. Nobility was abolished in 1821.

Writing in the first issue of *The Norseman*, Dr Arne Ording, Lecturer in Modern History at the Nobel Institute, Oslo, since 1935, says: 'From 1814 to 1939 Norway lived at peace, and this was a period of remarkable development for the Norwegian people. The country was largely industrialised, our foreign trade grew,

our shipping fleet became one of the most important in the whole world, production for the open market extended to the rural districts, and the standard of living of the people became one of the highest in Europe. On the basis of the free Constitution, the social system became more and more democratic, and the peasants and the workers became the strongest elements in political life. Popular education and social legislation were steadily developed, and numerous professional and economic organisations were formed which brought large sections of the people into public affairs. Our art and science convinced the world that a nation's contribution is not dependent on the size of the population.'

In Norway before the war, education was on as high a level as anywhere in the world. It was compulsory and even High School and University were free and available to all. There were no illiterate adults in Norway. The aim of the Norwegian Education Authorities was not only to establish literacy, but also to help the children to become efficient and right-minded citizens, to develop the individual personality and potentialities of every child. This system has played a very important part in the building of modern Norway. The children were not all to be cast in the same mould. They were to develop each according to his capacity, and here lies the best guarantee against intellectual regimentation, such as is common in Germany and Italy.

About 97 per cent of the population of Norway belong to the Evangelical Lutheran State Church, 1 per cent belong formally to no church, and the remaining 2 per cent are divided among Lutheran Free Congregations, Methodists, Baptists, and Congregations of Pentecost. There are only about 3,000 Roman Catholics and 1,400 Orthodox Jews. Would to God the religious and spiritual health of Britain was as sound as that of Norway.

Norway's contribution to the cultural life of the world must not be forgotten. The names of Ibsen, Bjornson, Svendson and Grieg will be honoured wherever the true spirit of music and literature is appreciated. The name of Fridtjof Nansen, explorer, humanitarian and peacemaker, is written indelibly upon the long roll of fame. His work for the homeless and persecuted will be remembered in every land where the torch of freedom still burns.

Composed of 150 representatives, of whom one-third represent the towns and two-thirds the rural districts, the Storting—that is, the Parliament—is elected every four years by universal suffrage, women voting equally with men. The last election was in 1936; previous to that elections were held every third year. One quarter of the Storting is elected to constitute the Lagting, the other three-quarters forming the Odelsting; all laws are dealt with by both parts in separate sittings. There are fifteen permanent Parliamentary Committees.

Norway, like Britain, is a country whose foreign trade is essential to her prosperity; and that trade is largely conducted with the British Empire and America. Norway, in time of peace, supplies Britain with products of great value, notably fish and minerals; and perhaps most important of all, Norway and Britain have a common interest as being both vitally dependent on the carrying trade which their merchant fleets conduct for other countries.

The Norwegians, like the British, are essentially a seafaring people, and have learned the lessons of the sea: the wide outlook, the tolerance of strange climates and ways of behaviour, the habit of migration. As Professor Gilbert Murray has truly said: 'Norway understands us. There is probably no nation with whom the average Englishman finds intercourse so easy and friendship so natural. There are possibly some qualities due to race; an honesty and simplicity, a certain intellectual laziness, a tendency to take things easily and not get excited, combined with a fierce fighting power if tempers are once lost.'

Professor Murray further states: 'If stability is to be found anywhere—and without stability civilisation is doomed—it will be in Britain, Belgium and the Scandinavian Group. The inestimable treasure of what we call 'Christian civilisation,' and the liberal humane culture which goes with it, is mainly in their hands to keep or to lose. When the first disorders of victory are over, it will be for these nations to stand together for the restoration and maintenance of that moderate and law-abiding public life which is the mark of civilised man.'

The Norwegians are a sturdy nation, inhabiting the most northerly of all civilised countries. They have to work hard and use all their ingenuity to wrest a livelihood from nature. Indeed, 74 per cent of Norway is made up of mountains and moors, glaciers and lakes, which make magnificent scenery and attract tourists from all parts, but have very small productive value. Forests cover 23 per cent of the country and only 3 per cent of the surface is cultivated land.

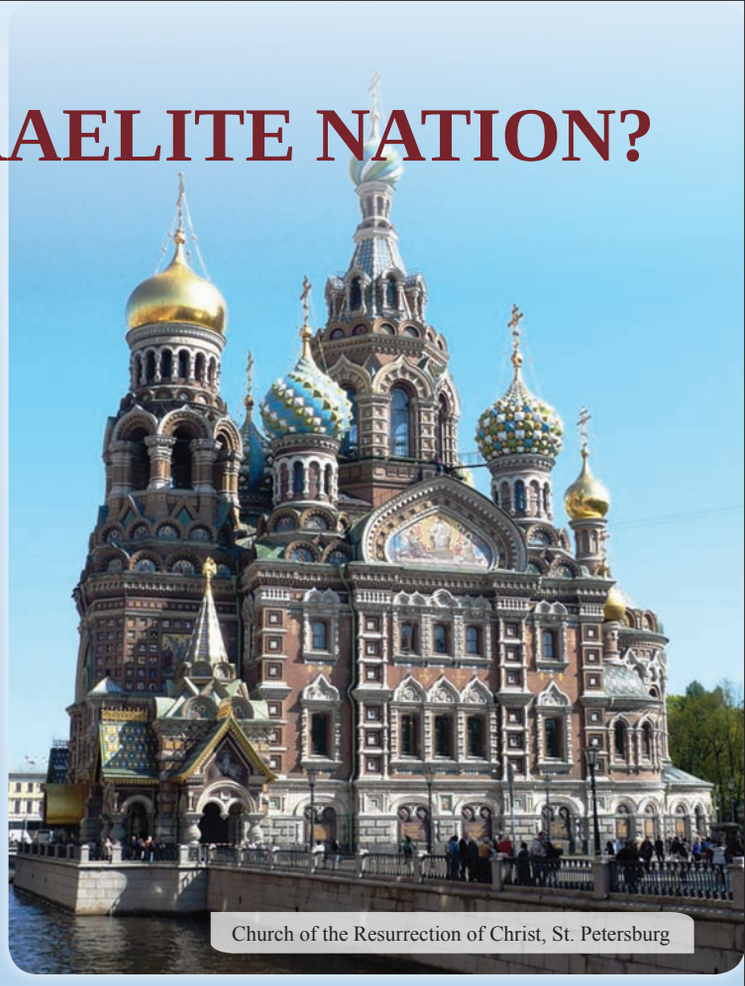
To these stalwart people, our brethren and kinsmen, we stretch out our hand. A nation truly progressive in time of peace and valiant in war, we salute the Blue Cross of Norway and the Vikings who sail the seven seas, our comrades in arms, of one blood with ourselves, sharing common ideals of justice, truth and freedom.

"*From Yangtse to Mississippi, from Dnieper and Don to Thames,*
The same high purpose is glowing, the same bold spirit flames,
For eastern and western barbarian the reckoning hour draws nigh;
Satan has smitten a world, and a world will now reply!"
(A Norwegian poet).

THE REV ANSLEY F RASH

*That is one locality assigned to 'Asgard.' The original locality identified by Sir H Rawlinson as Asagata of the Persians is in the very country of Israel's captivity.

RUSSIA - IS IT AN ISRAELITE NATION?


Church of the Resurrection of Christ, St. Petersburg

Recently when I visited St. Petersburg one of the things that struck me was how much the Russians had restored the churches after seven decades of neglect and destruction during the Soviet Union. The Temple of the Assumption, an Orthodox church built in 1895, had been turned into a public ice skating hall during the Soviet Era, but had now been beautifully restored. A German Evangelical church built in the 1830s had been turned into a public swimming pool. Even though the pews were the benches from the Soviet Era swimming pool this church was also working as a place of worship once again.

This was some contrast to my native Denmark where church after church is closing due to lack of attendance. I therefore thought it would be worthwhile to examine if the Russians are an Israelite people, or at least partly Israelite.

The Russian people

The Russians are an East Slavic-speaking people. The proto-Slavs lived in Central Eastern Europe, but in the sixth century they started migrating west, to the Balkans, and north and east. The proto-Slavs do not appear to be of Israelite origin. The Slavs that migrated north and east assimilated or displaced the Finno-Ugric and Baltic tribes which lived there and evolved into the East Slavs.

Snorri Sturlasson

Snorri Sturlasson of Iceland wrote in *Heimskringla or the Chronicle of the Kings of Norway* (*c*. 1230) that a chieftain called Odin led the Asir and Vanir tribes from south of the Caucasus Mountains, across Gardarike (Russia) to Saxland (Germany) and Scandinavia.[1] These were definitely of the lost tribes of Israel. Asir and Vanir seem to be corruptions of the names of the Israelite tribes Asher and Dan. Snorri wrote that this migration took place when the Roman Empire was expanding.

From the fourth to second century BC the Sarmatians, an Iranian-speaking people, came to dominate the steppes of southern Russia. The most powerful Sarmatian group was the Alans. The Alans dominated several of the East Slavic tribes, and the name of the strongest of these Alanic-Slavic tribes was the Antes. The Caucasian Alans were called *As* or *Os*.[2]

The name of the Alanic *As/Os* is remarkably close to the Asir which Snorri Sturlasson places in the very same region at the very same time. They seem to be one and the same tribe.

The Goths

In the third century AD the Sarmatians were displaced by the East Germanic-speaking Goths who subdued many of the Slavic tribes and created a huge empire in Eastern Europe under Ermenrich. The Gothic Empire was shattered when the Huns, a Turkic-speaking people, invaded from the east in the 370s.

The Goths were no doubt Israelites of the tribe of *Gad*. After their defeat by the Huns, the largest group of Goths, the Visigoths, invaded the Roman Empire, defeated the Roman army at Adrianople in 378, migrated across the entire Empire, sacked Rome in 410, and settled in south-west Gaul as *foederati* of the Romans. The Gothic kingdom eventually evolved into the Spanish and Portuguese kingdoms.

Scandinavians of the Viking Age

Starting in the sixth century Scandinavians began to explore, trade and colonize north-western Russia.[3] These Scandinavians were mainly from Sweden, but also from Norway, Denmark and Iceland.

These Scandinavians seem to have been chiefly of the tribe of Gad. The southern part of Sweden is called *Götaland*, which is derived from the tribe the *Geats* (English)/*Götar* (Swedish)/*Gautar* (Old Norse). This is reflected in place names in Sweden: the island Gotland, the second largest city Göteborg (Gothenburg) and the provinces Västergötland (West Gothland) and Östergötland (East Gothland).

According to the "Normanist Theory," which most western scholars subscribe to[4], it is from these Scandinavians that Russia got its name. The Finno-Ugric peoples that inhabited much of north Russia called these Scandinavians *Rus*. The modern Finnish and Estonian names for Sweden are, for example, *Ruotsi* and *Rotsi*, respectively.

At first the name *Rus* was only applied to the Scandinavian ruling class, later both to the Scandinavian and Slavic ruling class, and later to the entire nation.

Kievan Rus

According to the *Primary Chronicle*, a document compiled in Kiev in the early twelfth century, in 860-862 the Scandinavian Rus first gained con-

trol over the northern Slavs and Finno-Ugrians, but then the Slavs and Finno-Ugrians threw them out. They were, however, constantly fighting among themselves and therefore asked the Rus to come back and rule over them. The leader of the Scandinavians, Rurik, built Novgorod, south-east of today's St. Petersburg, made it his capital, and founded the dynasty which ruled Russia until the seventeenth century. A large group of Rurik's followers, led by Askold and Dir, took Kiev, which until then had been paying tribute to the Khazars, and founded a competing Rus state. In 880-882 Oleg, Rurik's successor, killed Askold and Dir, took control of Kiev and made it the new capital of the Rus state.[5]

The *Primary Chronicle* relates that a century later the pagan Grand Prince of Kiev, Vladimir, sent emissaries to the Islamic Bulgars, the Roman Catholic Germans and the Orthodox Christian Byzantines to report how they worshipped God. And in 989 Vladimir chose to be baptized as an Orthodox Christian.[6]

The Scandinavian Rus were always a minority among the Slavs. But the two groups assimilated, so that by the mid eleventh century the rulers were almost completely Slavicized.[7] This marks the ethnogenesis of Russia.

Mongol rule

The Kievan Russian state ended with the Mongol invasion 1237-1240. Within a hundred years Poland and Lithuania had taken western Russia from the Mongol Golden Horde, while the Grand Duchy of Moscow was under Mongol rule until 1480.

This caused a lasting cultural, religious and linguistic difference between the Great Russians (or just "Russians") in the east and the Little Russians (or Ukrainians) and White Russians (or Belarussians) in the west.

Tribe of Gad

While most of the ancestors of the modern Russians do not seem to be of Israelite origin, a good number of them do, most notably the Asir/As/Alans, the Goths and the Rus Scandinavians. The question is therefore: Have the Israelite groups influenced the national character of Russia so much that we can consider Russia an Israelite nation?

It is worth noticing that Russia has many similarities with the Israelite tribe of Gad.

Jacob prophesied of Gad: "*Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last*" (*Genesis* 49:19). Fulfillment: Russia was overcome by the Mongols and their Turkic-speaking subjects, collectively called Tatars, in the thirteenth century, but eventually threw off the yoke and began taking back the steppes from them.

The Cossacks

When Gad was born, Leah said the prophetic words: "*A troop cometh*" (*Genesis* 30:11) Fulfillment: An essential part of the taking back of the steppes was done by the Cossacks, who appeared in the fifteenth century when the Golden Horde was disintegrating. The Cossacks were a kind of free frontiersmen who lived in the no man's land between the Grand Duchy of Moscow, Lithuania and the Tatars. Moscow used them as a buffer zone against Tatar raids, but they were nonetheless independent. The Cossack lifestyle was very free compared to Russians elsewhere and their society is described as a "military democracy."[8]

Geographical similarity with Gad

Moses said: "*Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad*" (*Deuteronomy* 33:20-21). A modern Gadite nation would therefore be likely to be big. Fulfillment: Russia is the largest nation on the entire planet. The Ukraine is the second largest nation in Europe (after Russia!).

Trinity Church and Monastery, Chernihiv

When the Israelite tribes settled in the land of Canaan, Gad was one of the 2½ tribes which settled on the eastern side of the Jordan river (*Numbers* 32), between the bulk of the Israelite tribes west of the Jordan and the non-Israelite nations further east. Fulfillment: If we compare the modern nations of north-western Europe with the bulk of the ancient Israelite tribes west of the Jordan, then Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus can be compared to ancient Gad east of the Jordan.

Conclusion

Is Russia then an Israelite nation?

Most of the ancestors of the Russians are non-Israelites, but some of them are of Israelite origin, like the Asir/As/Alans, the Goths and the Scandinavian Rus. These Israelite groups have not only contributed genetically to the Russian people, but they have also made such an impact on the character of the Russian people that Russia does show true signs of being an Israelite nation. Not only a "Spiritual Israel" nation, in the sense of being a Christian nation, which a nation without Israelite ancestry also could show, but also a "literal Israel" nation partially descended from the ancient Israelites.

MIKKEL KRAGH

Sturlasson, *Ynglinge Saga* Part 5
2 Vernadsky, p. 21-22
3 Ellis Davidson, p. 26
4 Ibid, p. 57-60
5 *Primary Chronicle*, p. 6-8
6 Ibid, p. 10-12
7 Haywood, p. 104
8Vernadsky, p. 94-97

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THE POMEGRANATE

The fruit of the pomegranate tree is one of the most interesting fruits in the Bible. The small tree on which it grows is native to the eastern Mediterranean basin and it has been cultivated from time immemorial. It is mentioned in many ancient texts besides the Bible, including Babylonian clay tablets, the Hindu Vedas, Homer's *Odyssey* and the Quran. Ancient Persians painted pomegranates on their shields for protection in battle, and Cleopatra used them in a facial mask. The pomegranate was also found on ancient coins of Judea, and its botanical name, *Punica granatum*, derives from the Phoenicians who broadened its cultivation.

Its English name is derived from two Latin words: *pomum*, "apple or fruit" and *granum*, "grain or seed." It literally means "seeded fruit." All fruits contain seeds, but the pomegranate is unique in having no fleshy part but rather a hard red rind filled with juicy, edible, scarlet seeds. To my knowledge, it is the only fruit which, when eating it, you consume the seeds rather than the flesh. The fruit is a rounded hexagonal shape and, cut crosswise, the seeds are seen to be arranged in a six-pointed star pattern reminiscent of the hexagram or Star of David. The deep red gemstone, the garnet, also takes its name from *granum*, from its resemblance to pomegranate seeds. On the other hand, the Hebrew word for pomegranate is *rimmon* which comes from a root meaning "to rise, exalt, lift up, mount up," making for some people a mystical allusion to resurrection.

Because of its beautiful bright red flowers, the pomegranate is often grown as an ornamental tree, as well as for its fruit. But the pomegranate's seeds, and even the rind and the bark, have many health-giving properties, and have been used in traditional remedies for thousands of years. The fruit contains vitamins, flavonoids, precious polyphenols, antioxidants and antivirals, and is effective in treating heart disease and lowering blood pressure. As these benefits become better understood and appreciated, we are seeing these valuable fruits, and their juice, more widely available on our supermarket shelves, one grocery store flyer even labelling them "the media darlings of the new millennium"!

Because the pomegranate is bursting with many seeds, it became from ancient times, and in many different cultures, a symbol of fecundity or procreative power, both male and female. Its hard-cased fruit is likened to both the ovaries and testes, and the blood-red juice furnished by the seeds has been linked to both uterine blood and the blood of Christ. In several paintings by Botticelli, including "Madonna of the Magnificat" and "Madonna of the Pomegranate," the infant Jesus and His mother are holding a partially opened pomegranate, suggesting the spiritual fertility of Christ, who engenders a multitude of spiritual sons and daughters. In the famous medieval tapestries, "The Hunt of the Unicorn," located in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and "The Lady and the Unicorn," in the Cluny Museum, Paris, the unicorn is often placed in juxtaposition with a fruit-laden pomegranate tree. As the unicorn was a popular medieval symbol for Jesus Christ, so the pomegranate tree depicted near it is another link

between the fruit and Christ's saving blood. In other cultures, including Iran and China, pomegranates represent fertility and abundance, and so are traditionally given at marriages.

In ancient Greece, however, the pomegranate had a negative connotation and was known as the "fruit of the dead." This belief stemmed from the myth of Demeter, the goddess of agriculture, and her daughter, Persephone. One day, while picking flowers in a meadow, Persephone was seized by the god Hades (Pluto) and carried by him down to his kingdom in the Underworld, where he wished to make her his queen. Her sorrowing mother sought her in vain, and in her grief she ceased to care for the earth, allowing vegetation to wither and die and bringing famine to the land. Finally, Demeter discovered Persephone's whereabouts and pleaded with Zeus to have her daughter restored to her. Zeus promised that she could return if she had not eaten anything in the lower realm. But Hades had tricked Persephone into eating six pomegranate seeds, and so Zeus ruled that she would have to remain in Hades' gloomy kingdom for six months of every year – one month for each seed. As a result, during those six months, Demeter mourns for her daughter and no longer gives fertility to the earth, accounting for the barren months of autumn and winter, while her daughter's joyful return marks the resurgence of new life in the spring.

Pomegranates also hold an important place in the history of Israel. They are listed in *Deuteronomy* 8:8 as one of the seven types of fruit and grains demonstrating the abundance of the Promised Land, and some scholars suggest that the pomegranate was the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. The number of seeds or arils in the fruit varies from 200-1400, but in Jewish tradition they are said to hold 613 seeds each, one for each of the *mitzvot* or commandments of the Torah.

Because the calyx of the fruit forms a serrated "crown," the pomegranate was also used as a holy emblem. It was depicted on the dress of the High Priest of Israel, whose robe bore alternating golden bells and pomegranates around its hem. Like the hangings of the Tabernacle and the High Priest's garment known as the ephod, the pomegranates were made of the sacred colours of Israel, blue, purple and scarlet. We are not told how many pomegranates and bells there were on the hem of the robe, but it has been suggested there were nine of each, representing the nine fruits (pomegranates) and nine gifts (bells) of the Spirit. The sacred decoration on the hem of the robe reminds us of the woman with an issue of blood who was healed by touching the hem of Jesus' – the true High Priest's – garment (*Matthew* 9:20-22).

The pomegranate was also used as a decoration in Solomon's Temple. Before the entrance to the Temple were two large, free-standing pillars, 18 cubits (27 ft.) high. Their chapiters, or capitals, were covered with networks and wreaths, and two hundred bronze pomegranates in two rows on each (I *Kings* 7:15-22). These two pillars, being free-standing and not part of the weight-bearing structure of the Temple – similar to the twin obelisks set up on either side of the entrances to temples in Egypt – were personified by Solomon as Jachin (Established) and Boaz (Strength). They may be taken as symbolizing the dual role of the Messiah as King and Priest – the two pillars providing a necessary double witness, for Jesus said, "*It is written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true*." Jesus continued, "*I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me*" (*John* 8:17-18), hence, the two pillars may also represent the Father and Son, and the profusion of many-seeded pomegranates on them, the fructifying Word of God. Several of Jesus' parables illustrated that "*the seed is the word of God*" (*Luke* 8:11).

The Christian tradition has continued to use the symbolism of pomegranates as a motif in religious decoration. They are carved in churches and are woven into the fabric of vestments and liturgical hangings. The seeds are often compared to individual believers, gathered into one community of faith, and the juice to the blood of the martyrs. There is even a twelfth century shrine at Capaccio Vecchio near Paestum, Italy dedicated to Our Lady of the Pomegranate. Pilgrimages are still made here where there sits a statue of the Madonna enthroned, with the Christ Child in one hand and a pomegranate in the other. As mentioned earlier, the pomegranate, like the butterfly and the phoenix, is also a symbol of resurrection. When the fruit ripens, the seeds burst out, and just as the jacket is not able to hold the seed, neither was the grave able to hold Jesus.

In the mystical marriage canticle, the *Song of Solomon*, trees are frequently employed as metaphors, and the pomegranate is no exception; in fact, it is so used there more than any other tree. When the Bride is spiritually likened to an enclosed garden, the *Song* says, "*Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits*…" (4:12-14), giving the pomegranate pride of place among the nine fruits and spices mentioned. The Bridegroom, in describing His Bride, twice suggests, "*As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks*," while she promises to her Beloved, "*I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate*" (6:7 & 8:2). Both lovers speak of meeting in a garden where the pomegranates have budded, and this must be an allusion to the future Paradise, a belief also shared by Islam, for the Quran says that pomegranate trees grow in the gardens of Paradise.

In this brief study we have looked at many aspects of this remarkable fruit, but surely have not exhausted all there is to know. A second century Greek traveller, Pausanius, said: "About the pomegranate I must say nothing, for its story is somewhat of a holy mystery." Perhaps the pomegranate's deepest mysteries have yet to be revealed to us by the Holy Spirit – when the time is right!

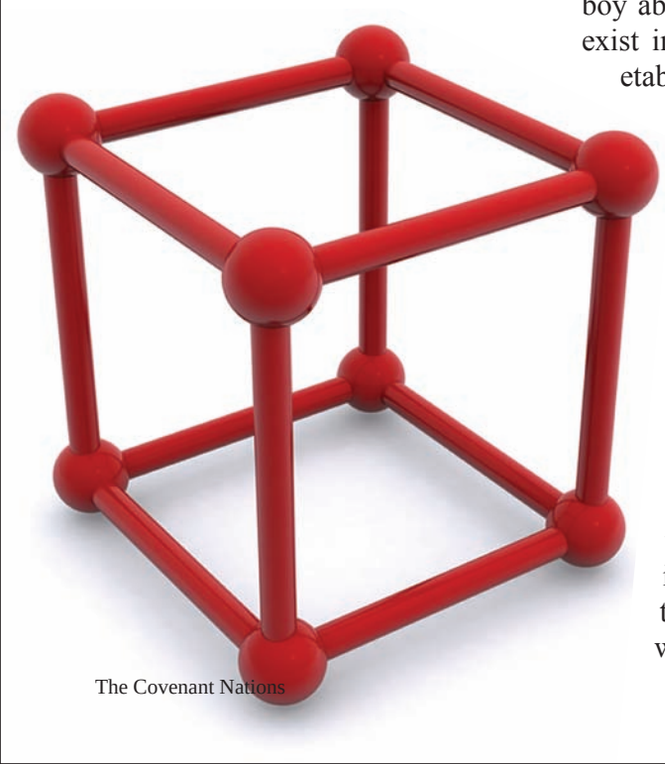
PATRICIA BAGWELL BA

2013

OUR THREE DIMENSIONAL WORLD

We live in a three dimensional world in the material sense, one in which everything has size, shape and substance. In geometric terms one line or one dimension conveys nothing apart from the distance, perhaps, between two points; it cannot convey shape or form. Two lines convey little more, just an angle of some degrees if they happen to be joined at a point. This can be used in navigation, of course, to determine one's position on the ocean or on some featureless expanse of land, although satellite navigation has now made that system almost redundant.

It requires three lines joined together to form a recognisable shape on a plain surface, a triangle of some kind depending on the length of each line. But that is only on a flat plane; it is a shape but without form or substance and which cannot occupy physical space. For an object of any substance to exist it requires three different measurements, and not just three lengths but a length, a breadth and a height. THEN it has form and shape and occupies space on this earth, even if it is just a simple cube. It can be any object made and designed for some purpose, one which can be seen and its purpose perhaps recognised from its shape and size. Any church or building has these three dimensions incorporated in its construction, the product of the architect's design.



Then there is another threefold dimension associated with a building and, indeed, with anything on this planet. That is the time dimension, for in everything there is a past, a present and a future. In life we should not ignore or forget the past but rather we should learn from it, avoiding repeating the mistakes or failures of it for the benefit of life in the present and for that of future generations.

In purely scientific terms there is a further threefold dimension which categorises the material world into mineral, vegetable and animal. One could say that all three have been involved in the creation of a church building. Obviously the stonework is the mineral element in its construction. The woodwork of the floor, roof timbers, furnishings, etc., is the vegetable element, coming as they do from trees once growing on the earth. The animal element is the human power and craftsmanship which shaped it and put it all together.

I am actually reluctant to put us in the animal category when I remember as a youngster getting a children's story book in which a mythical king told a boy about these three kingdoms that exist in the world, the animal, vegetable and mineral. He then asked the boy: "Which of these kingdoms do I belong to?" The boy replied: "None of these, sir, you belong to the kingdom of God." I agree with that, even if it does not quite fit in to the scientific definition of our place in the world.

So this three dimensional aspect of our material world is the product of God's creation; it was planned and designed in that way to work in accordance with His rules of operation. I would go along with the answer the little boy gave in the story for, after all, mankind was a special creation, with a purpose and responsibility to fulfil which could not be achieved by any animal however intelligent they might be. This is surely quite obvious when we read in *Genesis* 1:26: "*God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth*….." Man was put in charge, like a caretaker responsible for the safety and wellbeing of all forms of life on the earth.

You will have noticed the plural sense used in that declaration: not 'let me make' nor 'in my likeness.' What are we to make of this plural sense in the character of God? Can it be explained or is it a mystery beyond our comprehension? Well, since we are made in the image and likeness of God, as He said, surely we may be able to find some common ground, some compatibility between the human and the Divine nature.

So let us look at ourselves more closely. When you look at me you should just see a single figure, having shape and size and occupying space. But are you seeing the complete me? Well, no, in fact you are not really seeing the whole person. There is that part of me which you cannot see, the part which thinks, reasons, plans and motivates my visible actions and the audible utterances of my thoughts thus conveying to you what you cannot see with just your eyes. It is, I suppose, the baring of my soul to you, as it is said, when I make my thoughts known, an audible and visual expression of my inner self. Then there is that driving force which enables the various muscles and joints in my body to operate in compliance with the thoughts and desires formed in my brain or mind. This is a spirit power, something again which you cannot see, nor can it be packaged and put in a box, as the other two parts can; at death it

returns to God Who gave it in the first place, as we read in *Ecclesiastes*.

Therefore I am a three dimensional being, with body, mind and spirit, as is each one of you. In Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians he ends by writing these words: "…….*and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ*" (I *Thessalonians* 5:23). So this three dimensional aspect of our being is something that has been recognised by church divines down the centuries. Indeed the fact that there is more to the human being than just what is visible and physical has been acknowledged by philosophers and religious thinkers throughout the ages. How to understand and explain it has been the source of confusion and controversy up to the present day.

But being created in the image and likeness of God does not imply that we are exact copies of Him. He declares in Scripture: "*I am God and there is none other*." Yet He has that three dimensional aspect to His being, if on a higher plane than ours. Moreover He has three other great attributes. He is omnipotent, meaning His power is infinite while ours is very limited. He is omniscient, which means that His knowledge and understanding of everything in His creation is unlimited, it has no bounds. Again ours is very restricted, what we have being acquired in our short lifetime. God is omnipresent which means that He is everywhere in His universe. He has to be otherwise He would not be in control of everything. We can be present in one place only at any one time. Our thoughts can transport us to any place in the world we might have visited at some time and our vision of that place will be seen in our imagination but it is not a real presence, only a static vision recorded in our memory. And if you actually went back to it you would probably find that it had changed, anyway! Yes, we have attributes similar to God's but in an infinitely smaller and more limited scale.

Two thousand years ago Jesus of Nazareth walked on this earth, a visible male human being, proclaiming to be the Son of God. We are very familiar with His teaching ministry, the miracles He performed, the suffering and hostility He endured. His death on the cross at Calvary. Then His resurrection from the tomb and His ascension into heaven witnessed by His disciples. This was God in a physical form and presence but divested of His Divine glory so as to be like one of us and taking upon Himself the sins of mankind to be atoned for in the shedding of His sinless blood. This was a manifestation of the omnipotence of God and of His infinite love for mankind whom He had specially created, but who had committed the sin of disobedience to God and incurred the penalty of death for his sins.

Scripture states that Jesus Christ now sits at the right hand of God the Father, His Divine glory reinstated, and He has the position of intercessor for all who will approach God in spirit and in prayer. Jesus, of course, was unique and His crucifixion and death was what we call 'a one-off.' It will never happen again for there is no need, His sacrifice was all sufficient in the plans of God.

But that was not the first instance of the presence of God on earth in human form. That took place in the Garden of Eden when He talked to Adam. It took place again when He appeared to Abraham, camped on the plains of Mamre, who recognised the fact when he addressed Him as 'My Lord.' In verse 1 of chapter 18 in *Genesis* it states: "….*the Lord* [Jehovah] *appeared unto him* [Abraham]." Then again we read in *Exodus* 33:11: "*And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend*."

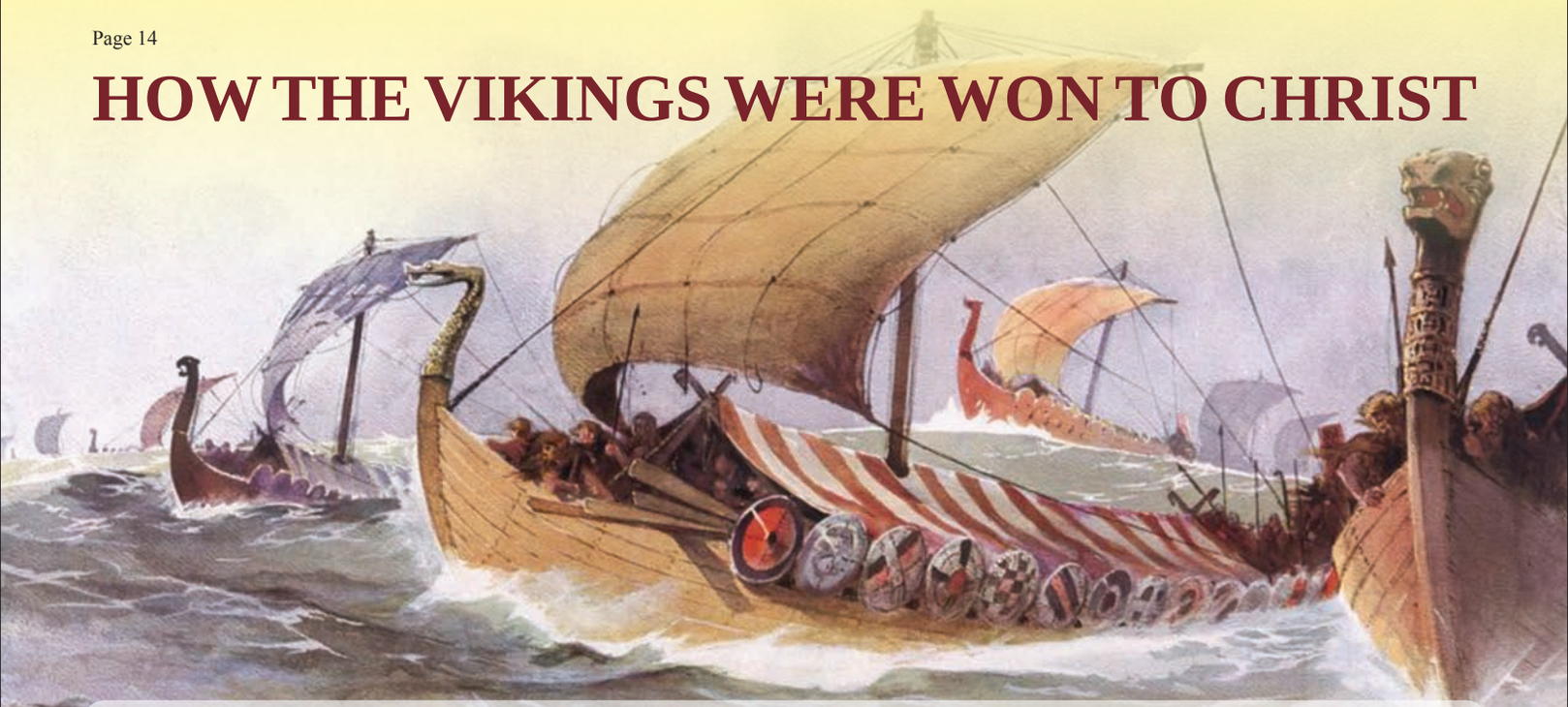
So we have the God of all creation revealed to us as able to appear in close communion with man, physically as well as spiritually. Yet at the same time he can be everywhere at once. The psalmist David marvelled at this, acknowledging that there is nowhere he can go without God being there also. "*If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there*." He is clearly overawed by the supernatural power God possesses and declares: "*I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well*" (*Psalm* 139:8, 14).

In trying to understand the mystery of God Who is our creator yet also our Saviour and Redeemer, we are grappling with what is infinite in all its dimensions by means of fallible human minds which are finite and have their distinct limitations. I think what I have tried to describe, in my own imperfect way, as three dimensional in God is described by St. Paul simply as 'fulness.' In *Ephesians* 3:19, he refers to: "*the fulness of God*." In 4:13 he refers to: "*the fulness of Christ*." In *Colossians* 2:9, he refers to: "*the fulness of the Godhead*." I do not think he is confused, he is just awed by the overwhelming power and majesty of an all-seeing, all-knowing and all-embracing Creator God. We, too, must surely be similarly in awe of One Who is beyond our complete understanding.

I have tried to describe in simple terms the three dimensions of my being or personality to illustrate my thoughts on this complex matter. I think of them as a necessary wholeness, three parts functioning together in harmony, as one living person, according to the design of my Maker. If any one of these three dimensions ceased to function I would no longer be the person I am. So likewise, and more seriously, if any one of the three dimension and attributes of God ceased to function then it would be the end of everything. Paul's 'fulness' would become instead 'emptiness.' All three dimensions of God are essentially complementary and working together as one Almighty Lord and Father of us all. For simplicity, and convenience, perhaps, we refer to it as a "Trinity."

ALFRED BROWN

HOW THE VIKINGS WERE WON TO CHRIST



The Scandinavians were the last great group of Abraham's descendants to abandon heathenism and embrace Christianity. The Viking marauders from the pagan North wreaked havoc throughout Northern and Western Europe. Throughout the ninth and tenth centuries Vikings raided, killed and plundered. They also established strong Viking settlements in Normandy, England, Scotland, Ireland, Iceland, Greenland, throughout the Baltic and in Russia.

Terror from the North

Alcuin wrote of the shocking Viking raid on the monastery at Lindisfarne in AD 793: "*Never before has such terror appeared in Britain as we have now suffered from a pagan race. Nor was it thought possible that such an inroad from the sea could be made. Behold, the Church of Saint Cuthbert splattered with the blood of the priests of God, despoiled of all its ornaments. A place more venerable than all in Britain has fallen prey to pagans*." Soon a new prayer was added to the church liturgy: "*From the fury of the Northmen, O Lord, deliver us*!"

The Viking Era

At the time, probably nobody could have predicted that the violent Vikings would be conquered by the Prince of Peace and become some of the most enthusiastic missionaries for the advance of Christianity. The Viking era is normally dated from the Lindisfarne raid of 793 to the battle of Hastings of 1066.

Impacting Culture

Although the Vikings were famous for their hit and run raids, many Vikings actually settled in the British Isles and deeply influenced English culture. The fact that we have a seven-day week is due to the biblical account that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. However, the days of the week were originally named by the Romans after the seven main celestial planets: The Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn. The Anglo Saxons replaced four of these with the names of Viking deities: Tuesday is named after the Viking war god, Tyr; Wednesday after the Viking war god, Wodin; Thursday is named after the Viking god of war, Thor; and Friday after the Viking fertility goddess, Frey.

Viking Words

Many English words have their roots in Scandinavian speech including: anger, die, scant, ugly, loose, wrong, low, sky, take, window, husband, happy, thrive, ill, beer and anchor. The word berserk is actually from the name of a Viking soldier.

Ansgar –The Apostle of the North

Born of Saxon parents in the North West of France in 801, Ansgar was described as a sensitive child who led a devout life. He experienced visions and dreams and possessed "*a combination of humility, self-forgetfulness, undaunted courage and energetic initiative*." When the Vikings were the terror of Europe God placed a great missionary burden on young Ansgar. With his own money Ansgar redeemed several Danish youths who were slaves. He educated them to be his co-workers in bringing the Gospel to their countrymen.

Denmark

Harold, King of Denmark, had been driven from his throne, and had sought refuge at the court of Louis I, King of the Franks. While at Louis' court King Harold heard the Gospel and turned to Christ, submitting himself to being baptised. On the king's return to Denmark, Ansgar eagerly joined the king to preach the Gospel to the Danes. At Hedeby he built a small wooden church, but persecution forced him to flee the country.

Sweden

Ansgar responded to a request from King Bjorn of Sweden. This was early in the ninth century when the Vikings were raiding, plundering and burning the coastal cities of Northern and Western Europe. He narrowly escaped with his life when Norsemen burned the churches and monasteries in Hamburg. With two co-workers Ansgar crossed the Baltic Sea to begin ministering in Sweden. On the way the vessel was plundered by pirates and they arrived there destitute. King Bjorn welcomed the Christians to Sweden and the first church was built in the country.

Stronger than Thor

At an assembly of the people a question was debated as to whether the missionaries should be allowed to continue to preach Christ and so invite the anger of the old Viking gods. At a critical part

in the discussions, an old Viking stood up and declared with great force that it was clear that the Christian God was stronger than Thor. This decided the matter and the missionaries received freedom to continue to preach the Gospel in Sweden.

God's Judgment
More than any previous invasions and crises faced by the Christian church, the Viking raids wrought desolation throughout western Christendom. The Vikings laid waste to monasteries and churches, shaking the churches to their foundations. A decline and decay in faith and morals had set in before the Viking invasions and many saw the fury of the Norsemen as a judgment of God upon a backslidden, and often apostate, church.

Resistance in Wessex
Churches and monasteries were destroyed, clergy and monks were slain, church buildings lay vacant until, in the South of England the West Saxons were rallied by King Alfred the Great to steadfastly resist, and ultimately defeat, the great Danish invasion.

Conversion of the Vikings
In 878, after King Alfred defeated the Danish army at Ashdown, he required King Guthrum, and thirty of his leaders, to be baptised as Christians. In 882, another Viking leader in the lower Rhine region abandoned heathenism and embraced Christianity receiving baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Duke Rollo of the Vikings, and some of his followers, received baptism and created the Duchy of Normandy.

Impressed by Christ
One of the chief attractions was the conviction that Christ is a mighty Victor who has risen triumphant over death. The power of Christ impressed the hardened Viking warriors. In Norway the king commanded his people to be converted to Christ or be prepared to die. However, in Denmark and Sweden the Vikings were converted by persuasion not force. Pioneer missionaries Willibrord and Liudger attempted to take the Gospel to the Vikings.

Winning Sweden to Christ
King Harold of Denmark was baptised in 826 in Mainz. Despite serious reverses, violence and destruction of churches, Ansgar did not give up, he persevered and soon Danish missionaries were being sent to establish churches in Sweden. Ansgar's faithful work was continued by his disciple, Rimbert, who ministered both amongst the Danes and the Swedes. Rimbert was succeeded by Adalgar.

Saxons Champion Christianity
As the Saxons grew in strength they became champions of the Christian cause. When Henry became King of the Germans in 919, he sponsored numerous missionary outreaches to the Danes. After his victory over the Danes in 934, King Henry compelled their rulers to accept Christianity. Unni was encouraged by the king to renew the work of Ansgar. Gorm's successor King Harold looked with favour upon Unni's attempts to reassemble the scattered remnants of Christian communities on the Danish Isles and to bring in ministers to rebuild these congregations.

Reform and Revival
King Henry's son, Otto the Great, became king in 936, and in 962 was crowned emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Under royal favour the churches experienced a wave of reform with a tremendous revival of devotion and enthusiasm. King Harold of Denmark extended his realm to become overlord of Norway. As he himself was baptised he encourage the spread of Christianity throughout his realms.

Statue of Leif Erikson, Trondheim, Norway

Growth Despite Opposition
Harold's son, Sweyn, attempted to bring about a pagan rebellion against his father who died in the struggle (986). Sweyn severely persecuted Christians and repeatedly invaded England where he died in 1014. In Sweden a pagan King, Eric, arose, hostile to Christianity. Yet the church continued to grow. The missionary Poppo won many thousands to the Christian faith in Denmark. Odinkar was a missionary from Denmark who strengthened the Gospel work in Sweden.

King Canute Sponsors Missions
Under King Canute the church was firmly established in Denmark. Canute later became king of all England. Under his support missionaries from Germany established more churches in Denmark. He commanded his subjects to learn The Lord's Prayer and to be faithful in Communion with the Lord. The church in Denmark grew and deepened with strong ties to the Saxon churches in Germany and England.

Missions to Norway
The conversion of the Vikings in Norway was far more stormy, than that of Denmark. Throughout the tenth century Saxon missionaries from England laboured throughout Denmark establishing many mission stations and congregations. From the time of King Alfred the Great the revived churches in England evidenced a dynamic vitality in missions to the Vikings.

The Kingdom of Norway
The Norwegian kingdom was the creation of Harald Haarfager (fair hair) who died in 933. By much combat he had established himself as the over ruler of all Norway. His sons Eric Bloodaxe and Haakon the Good struggled over the succession. Haakon had been sent to England to study and there had been converted, baptised and discipled as a Christian. By 935 the young, tall, handsome and athletic Haakon had established his supremacy through combat and was accepted as king of all Norway.

To Win the Vikings
Haakon then attempted to win his people to the Christian Faith. Most of his immediate court were soon baptised. Later he sent to England for missionaries and began to build churches in Norway. By the year 950 after he had been reigning 15 years, Haakon proposed to the assembly of landowners that they adopt Christianity. Most of the landowners responded with great hostility and vehemently refused to abandon the old pagan ways. They began to place great pressure on the king to compromise and participate in their pagan sacrifices. Facing open rebellion King Haakon, very reluctantly, ate some of the meat in their ceremonial feast organised by his landowners. Later, after been wounded in battle, on his deathbed, in 961, Haakon declared his great remorse over that compromise and his desire to do penance for his sins.

A Rocky Road and Reverses
His nephew, Harold Graafell, succeeded to the throne of Norway. While not as enthusiastic a Christian as Haakon, Harold Graafell did pull down pagan temples wherever he went. However misrule and bad seasons led much of the people to resent the faith which he had violently championed. In 970 Harold Graafell was lured to Denmark and killed. King Harold Bluetooth of Denmark then made himself the overlord of Norway and encouraged the spread of Christianity there.

Olaf Trygvesson
Olaf Trygvesson was the son of the King of Norway. His great grandfather, Harald Haarfager (Fair-hair), had initially established the Kingdom of Norway. When Olaf's father was murdered in 968, he fled the country with his mother. Vikings captured their ship and sold the boy into slavery. Olaf ended up in the court of Russia's Tsar Vladimir I, where he became a favourite of the Queen. When he was just twelve years old, the Tsar put a dozen ships under his command and sent him off into battle.

A Viking without Equal
By the time he was 21 years old, Olaf Trygvesson was renowned as the ultimate Viking, tall, strong, handsome, and unequalled in martial skill. He led a huge army of Swedish Vikings, in a fleet of almost ninety ships to loot Holland. After devastating the Dutch, he went to fight the French and left a massive amount of death and destruction wherever he went.

Extortion in England
His next target was England where, after the battle of Maldon, near the mouth of the Thames, he forced the Anglo-Saxon King, Ethelred the Unready, to pay a tribute of 10,000 pounds of silver. After this he moved North plundering Northumberland and Scotland. He attacked the Hebrides and the Isle of Man. He conducted raids of Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, and France again. With a fleet of over ninety-four ships he again attacked England, killing and looting wildly until King Ethelred offered him a further 22,000 pounds.

Seeking Sorcery
Off the coast of Cornwell Olaf heard of a local fortune teller who was renowned to have a gift of prophecy. He rowed to the remote rocky retreat and asked the prophet if he could foresee anything in his future.

A Word of Prophecy
"*Thou wilt become a renowned king and do celebrated deeds. That thou not doubt the truth of this answer, listen to this* …" The old man predicted that Olaf would soon suffer a mutiny from his men, in which he would be wounded and carried to his ship on his oblong shield. After seven days he would recover and he would be baptised as a Christian. "*Many men wilt thou bring to faith and baptism, and both to thy own and others' good*."

Mutiny
When the mutiny, wounding and recovery happened, precisely as the hermit had predicted, Olaf sought the old man again to enquire how he could possess such knowledge. The man humbly confessed: "*The God of the Christians has blessed me*."

Conversion
When King Ethelred heard of the conversion and baptism of his tormentor, King Olaf, he sent his bishop and officials to present him with royal gifts and to offer Christian fellowship.

Confronting Apostasy
In 995, news from Norway reached Olaf that the leader Earl Haakon, the very man who had murdered Olaf's father, had caused an uproar in the land by demanding the daughters of respected leaders of the community. Although Earl Haakon had originally accepted Christianity, under threat from the German Emperor Otto, he had since reverted to heathenism, restoring many heathen temples and persecuting Christians. Earl Haakon the Apostate had even gone so far as to offer his best horses and his youngest son, a seventeen year old, as sacrifices to a heathen goddess.

For the Love of Justice
It was at this opportune time that Olaf, the great grandson of King Harald Haarfager, determined to leave England and avenge the death of his father, the exile of his mother, the slavery of his youth and to end the pagan misrule of Earl Haakon.

Norway for Christ
With just five ships Olaf landed in Norway and claimed it for Christ. Soon word reached him that Earl Haakon had angered two landowners by attempting to seize their wives for himself. The growing resistance was greatly strengthened when word reached them that Olaf Trygvesson was on his way to claim the throne and deal with Haakon. Olaf was renowned as the Viking warrior without parallel. His height, strength, athletic stature, superior skills in all the warrior arts, his boldness and ruthlessness were renowned throughout the land. Earl Haakon the Apostate fled and hid in a pit beneath a pigsty, where he was killed by his slave.

Repent or Perish
At a national assembly Olaf was proclaimed King of all Norway. He then travelled throughout the land consolidating his rule and attempting to Christianise the people. Many of his relatives became his first converts and he appointed them as "*Christ's captains*." "*I shall make you great and mighty men for doing this work. All Norway must be Christian or die*!"

Greater than Thor and Odin
The scattered settlements on the West and East shores of the Oslofjord readily accepted baptism, but the people in the Northern part of the Vic resisted the Gospel. King Olaf challenged the followers of Thor and Odin to combat and by the end of the year he had convinced everyone that Christ was greater than Thor and Odin.

Conversion by Contest and Combat
As King Olaf moved to the Western and Northern fjords of Norway he challenged the heathen to swimming races, archery contests and mortal combat. His message was to the point: *Repent or die*! Those who chose to fight were quickly defeated by Olaf's superior strength and skill.

War against Heathenism
King Olaf declared that the heathen gods were demons. The powers behind the idols were evil spirits. All sorcerers, and those who promoted idolatry and heathenism, were to be banished. Those wizards and priests who resisted were killed and some other incorrigibles were marooned on a rock far offshore at low tide.

Heathen Sacrifice
At Trondheim, which had been the stronghold of the late heathen King Earl Haakon, Olaf burned the heathen temples and destroyed the idols. The local chiefs rose in rebellion against him. He mustered a large army, and with thirty ships anchored in the River Nid, Olaf invited the local chiefs to a feast where he indicated that he would be willing to perform a heathen sacrifice. When the chiefs were gathered together, Olaf declared: "*If I am to return to making heathen sacrifices then I will make the greatest sacrifice of all. I will not sacrifice slaves but men. I will sacrifice the greatest of men only*." He named the most prominent leaders of the opposition.

Baptism or Battle
As the horrified heathen howled in protest, Olaf gave them a straight challenge: "*Baptism or Battle*." He held eleven leaders hostage until everyone was baptised. At nearby Trondheim the local Chief Ironbeard demanded that the king offer sacrifices, as other kings before him had done. Olaf said he would make a sacrifice, walked into the temple and smashed the idol of Thor to pieces with his axe. He then killed Ironbeard and persuaded the rest of the village to abandon their heathen ways and to be baptised as Christians.

Defeating all Resistance
Further north Olaf faced the strong opposition of Chief Raud the Strong. Raud mobilised his army and a fierce sea battle was fought. Olaf's forces overwhelmed Raud's rebels. Raud escaped to take refuge in an island hide-out in Saltenfjord. The narrow channel to the fjord was turbulent and for a week no ship could enter. As Raud attempted to mobilise his witchcraft against the king, Olaf summoned his bishop to read the Gospels and pray. By some miracle his ships managed to negotiate the treacherous and turbulent rocky entrance to the fjord. Soon Raud was apprehended and brought before the king who ordered him to submit to Christ. "*I will not take your property from you but instead will be your friend, if you make yourself worthy to be so*." When Raud rejected this offer, with vile blasphemies, Olaf had his men force an adder down his throat.

Crusade Completed
This was the last resistance to Olaf's crusade to eradicate paganism in Norway. Now he focused on winning Iceland and Greenland to Christ. But before he could do so, in the year 1000, King Olaf was killed in the spectacular sea battle of Svold. The pagan queen Sigrid the Haughty, was furious that he had spurned her advances. She mobilised two pagan kings to trap him off the coast of Denmark. Olaf died as courageously as he had lived, rejoicing that he had succeeded in his mission to convince the Vikings of Norway to abandon heathenism, to destroy their idols and to commit to following the Christian Faith.

Olaf Haraldsson
Another prominent Norwegian king who consolidated the Christian Faith in Norway was Olaf Haraldsson. In 1007, when he was just twelve years old, Olaf Haraldsson was sent out as a sea king to raid Sweden. Later, in Denmark, Olaf joined forces with Thorkel the Tall. They together launched raids on Jutland, Frisia, Holland and England. They tormented King Ethelred the Unready, who had already suffered much at the hands of the earlier Olaf Trygvesson. In 1009, Olaf and Thorkel attacked London and East Anglia. They martyred the archbishop of Canterbury and plundered the Cathedral. Thereafter Olaf raided Brittany, France and Spain.

Transformed
Then Olaf had a traumatic spiritual experience and he saw a terrifying vision of Christ. Olaf abandoned his heathen ways and committed to being a Christian. In 1015 he arrived in Norway and proclaimed himself king. He immediately proclaimed the Christian Faith throughout Norway and built numerous churches. Olaf became known as a great lawgiver. With Bishop Grimkell he established the Moster Law. While most of Norway accepted this, Trondelag continued with their pagan practices and incurred the wrath of King Olaf, who descended on the area fining or executing offenders.

Smashing Idols
At Gulbrandsdal, local pagans confronted him with their huge wooden idol of Thor. Olaf distracted them by drawing their attention to the bright sunrise behind them as a herald of his God. As his enemies turned to face the sunrise, one of Olaf's warriors smashed the idol of Thor and revealed that its wood was rotten. As gold spilled out, large rats, which had evidently been living off the food offerings, scattered. King Olaf pointed out that the gold they had wasted on offerings to Thor's rotten idol would look far better as jewellery on their wives and daughters.

This demonstration of Christ's superiority over Thor convinced the locals to be baptised. A contemporary report noted: "They who met as enemies, parted as friends."

Ending Piracy and Plunder
For twelve years King Olaf ruled Norway and saw that Iceland and the Faeroe Islands were discipled in Christianity. Most unpopularly of all he outlawed the Viking raids, which had been considered an essential way of life.

A Warrior to the End
It was at this point that Denmark attempted to regain control over their previous colony and he was forced to flee. In 1030 Olaf attempted to liberate his country from the Danes. At the battle of Stiklestad, heavily outnumbered, more than three to one, Olaf inspired his men with a battle cry: "*Fram. Fram. Kristsmenn, Kraossmenn, Konungsmenn*!" (On. On. Christ's men, Cross men, king's men!) Olaf and his men fought boldly and bravely, but were overwhelmed by superior numbers.

Success and Sainthood
As Danish taxes and oppression intensified the Vikings grew to regret their betrayal of King Olaf. Within a year he

was popularly proclaimed a Saint and his remains enshrined in Saint Clement. What he had failed to do in life, he achieved in death, to unite and inspire his people to win his country's freedom from Denmark and to be united as an independent Christian kingdom. The cathedral in York was dedicated to Saint Olaf. He was regarded by many medieval leaders as an example of the ideal ruler. A church in Constantinople was dedicated to the memory of King Olaf and the sword that he had wielded at the battle of Stiklestad was hung over the high altar. Olaf is the last Western saint to be accepted by the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The Vikings Surrender to Christ

So, by a combination of pioneer missionary work, royal favour and combat the ferocious Vikings were convinced to abandon heathenism, destroy their idols, abandon their aggression, cease their violent raids, submit to baptism and commit to following the Christian Faith.

Viking runes

Christ Triumphant

The Vikings came to be convinced that the Christian God is more powerful than all other gods. They saw how He answered the prayers of the Christians. They witnessed miracles. They saw how Christian kings and missionaries were able to destroy idols and defy the heathen gods and taboos – without suffering any ill effects. They saw that their pagan gods were powerless before the all powerful Jesus Christ. Christ was honoured and worshipped as the mighty Warrior who had triumphed over all the powers of death, hell and the grave. He is the risen ascended Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, with all other authorities in subjection to Him.

"Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him" (*Psalm* 72:11).

Scandinavia for Christ

The prominence of the Cross in every Scandinavian flag serves as a dramatic testimony to the conversion of the Vikings.

DR PETER HAMMOND
mission@frontline.org.za
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ISSACHAR - FRISIANS

A STUDY OF TEN PROPHETIC CLUES

There is no direct history connecting the tribe of Issachar to the Frisian people. We are talking about one of the ***lost*** *tribes. Even the Caucasian population of the Netherlands comes from various backgrounds. One can compare this with Jewry. The Jewish people have known many proselytes, yet, there has been a core of the tribe of Judah (and some of Levi & Benjamin) over the past 2,500 years. The core passes on characteristics and genes to the periphery. Looking at the 'prophetic clues' one has to conclude that a core of the tribe of Issachar once found its way to the northern parts of the Netherlands and Germany (the people north of the line Amsterdam-Bremen). This core passed on its characteristics and genes to the influx of others. The more fulfilled prophetic clues we find, the stronger our case. What follows is not historic proof, but proof by revelation.*

1st Clue: Issachar – strong ass

"*Issachar is a* ***strong ass*** *couching down between two burdens*" (*Genesis* 49:14, KJV, unless mentioned otherwise). "*Issachar is a* ***large-boned ass****, couching down between the sheep-folds*" (*Genesis* 49:14, JPS).

The patriarch Jacob compares his son Issachar to a stubborn, strong boned, donkey (mule). The stubbornness, the strong will of mules and donkeys are well known. Think of the story of Balaam and his donkey. If a donkey refuses to move, it is virtually impossible to make it go.

Frisians are known for their pride, common sense, stubbornness, determination, hence the Dutch expression 'Friese stijfkop,' which translates as 'stiff-necked Frisian' or 'hard-headed Frisian.' If a Frisian does not want to move, it is hard to make him go! There are two emblems for the tribe of Issachar: the ass or donkey (*Genesis* 49:14a) and the sun & moon (I *Chronicles* 12:32).

2nd Clue: Issachar's land is pleasant

"*And* [Issachar] *saw that* ***rest*** *was* ***good****, and the* ***land*** *that it was* ***pleasant***" (*Genesis* 49:15a).

"*When* [Issachar] *sees how* ***good*** *is his* ***resting-place*** *and how* ***pleasant*** *is his* ***land***" (*Genesis* 49:15a, NIV).

For those who know little or nothing about Frisians, Greater-Frisians or history of the Frisians, my advice is to study that first. Nowadays a lot can be found on the internet.

English Wikipedia starts the article Frisians with: "*The Frisians are a Germanic ethnic group native to the coastal parts of the Netherlands and Germany. They are concentrated in the Dutch provinces of Friesland and Groningen and, in Germany, East Frisia and North Frisia, that was a part of Denmark until 1864. They inhabit an area known as Frisia. The Frisian languages are still used by 500,000 speakers; dialects of Frisian are recognized as official languages in both the Netherlands and Germany*."

The Frisians in the Netherlands live in West Frisia, the province of Friesland, the province of Groningen and the West Frisian isles. The Frisians in Germany live in East Frisia, North Frisia, Helgoland and the East Frisian isles. It is worthwhile to study these areas first on Wikipedia and then read the rest of this article.

The Frisians are fond of their *earth, ground* and *land.* The English bless their king or queen in their national anthem, the French sing about their revolution and the Dutch have a psalm-like national anthem about William of Orange, but the Frisians sing about their land. The words *land, ground* and *earth* feature seven times in the first stanza and chorus of the Frisian national anthem.

In that light we should see the Frisian lands. The seven stripes and the seven water-lilies in the Frisian flag stand for those seven Frisian (sea-)lands. Those Frisian lands are lovely, agrarian, rustic, dotted with villages. Green polders, blue skies and white clouds, with black and white Frisian cows can be seen from West Frisia to East Frisia. Issachar saw that the land was pleasant. That is why there is no independent Frisian nation.

3rd Clue: … between two burdens

"*Issachar is a strong ass couching down between* ***two burdens***" (*Genesis* 49:14).

"*Issachar is a scrawny donkey lying down between two* ***saddle-bags***" (*Genesis* 49:14, NIV) (or **campfires**, NIV note).

Bible interpreters interpret the *mishpetaim*, the two burdens, the two saddle-bags or campfires in different ways. Some see this as *toil* and *taxes,* but the pleasantness of the land makes Issachar bow its head. Because the land is so good and so pleasant Issachar is willing to stay and to submit to others.

Apart from the literal agricultural sense of hard work this can also be interpreted in a political way; the Frisians (Issachar) bowed their heads to stronger political nations: Holland and Germany. *Greater Frisia* became the northern fringe of both the Netherlands and Germany.

The Frisians had an independent kingdom in the eighth century (King Redbad). However, Jacob's prophecies concern the end-time. The tribe of Issachar is one of the few tribes not to have a nation of their own in the end-time (acharit ha-yamim, *Genesis* 49:1). The blessing of Moses (*Deuteronomy* 33:18-19) hints at that as well,

as there is no separate blessing for Issachar. Issachar's blessing is incorporated in Zebulun's blessing.

The Frisians suffer the German and Dutch dominance (the two burdens), because they are in love with their land.

4th Clue: Issachar – a wage slave
"*And Leah said, God hath given me my **hire**, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Is_sachar* [ish_**sachar**, man of **hire** or **wages**]" (*Genesis* 30:18).
This refers back of course to the agricultural work Issachar would do, bow its back and labour away, in its fertile and tranquil land. Working, paying taxes and rejoicing the pleasantness of the land.

Issachar's name goes back to the story of the mandrakes (v. 14-18). Reuben has found mandrakes, Rachel wants them and Leah gives them to her 'to hire' her husband Jacob back and make him sleep with her.

The Frisian agricultural lands have not generated enough work for the local population over time, therefore many Frisians have spread out over the rest of the Netherlands. Issachar (the older of the two) serving Zebulun (the younger of the two).

"*Frisians have played an important role in Holland's political and cultural life, bigger than their number would expect*" (*Standaard Encyclopedie,* vol. 5, page 404).

Traditional jobs have been politicians, civil servants, doctors, teachers and lawyers. Many people in the *Randstad* (= Utrecht – Amsterdam – The Hague – Rotterdam) have Frisian surnames. Issacharites are often highly qualified 'wage-slaves,' or men of wages.

Wikipedia: "*De Vries is one of the most common Dutch surnames. It indicates a geographical origin: "Vriesland" is an old spelling of the Dutch province of Friesland (Frisia). Hence, "De Vries" means "The Frisian." The name has been transcended abroad to "DeVries," "deVries," or "Devries."*

5th Clue: Issachar, cows! husbandry!
"*And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, **in thy tents***" (*Deuteronomy* 33:18).
"*Issachar is a large-boned ass, couching down between the **sheep-folds***" (*Genesis* 49:14, JPS).
Zebulun is particularly blessed in his journeys and Issachar more at home, in his tents, the latter having to do with husbandry. The Issacharites in the end-time would love their land, which would be very suitable for agriculture in general and for husbandry in particular. *The Testament of Issachar* has the last words of the patriarch Issachar for his posterity. These words may never have been spoken, but they give extra knowledge about the tribe of Issachar and how the Issacharites were seen in ancient times.

Friesland flag

Issachar admonishes his sons to apply themselves to husbandry in particular: "*When, therefore, I grew up, my children, I walked in uprightness of heart, and I became a husbandman for my father and my brethren, and I brought in fruits from the field according to their season … Bow down your back unto husbandry, and toil in labours in all manner of husbandry, offering gifts to the Lord with thanksgiving. … For no other portion is given to you than of the fatness of the earth, whose fruits are raised by toil. For our father Jacob blessed me with blessings of the earth … Know ye therefore, my children, that in the last times your sons will forsake singleness, and will cleave unto insatiable desire … And leaving husbandry, they will follow after their own wicked devices…*" (*The Testament of Issachar*).

The Frisian cows are among the best cows in the world, with the highest milk production. Frisians are so well-known *as cows,* that many English do not realize that Frisians are *a people* too. Husbandry is one of the main identifiers of Issachar.

There is a Frisian horse too. The Frisian island of Texel has its own brand of sheep and there is also a kind of East Frisian sheep, which has a very high milk production. Issachar would be blessed with the fruits of the earth, and with livestock in particular.

In 2010 the Netherlands exported 4.6 billion euros of dairy products. The 2010 export was 157 million kilos of butter, 247 million kilos of milk-powder, 259 million kilos of condensed milk and 576 million kilos of cheese. All this made from 11.6 billion kilos of milk. No need to say the Frisian north of the country had an important input.

The Netherlands is the second biggest *exporting* country of agricultural products in the world.

6th Clue: Issachar, singleness, simplicity
"*Issachar, the fifth son of Jacob and Leah … 24 When, therefore, I grew up, my children, I walked in **uprightness** of heart … 27 I never slandered any one, nor did I censure the life of any man, walking as I did in **singleness** of eye*" (*The Testament of Issachar,* Chapter I).
Frisians are honest, sincere, down-to-earth, straightforward, single-minded people. Even more so than the Dutch in general. *Straight, sober* and *square* are terms Frisians are known by in the rest of the country. *Just act normal, that's weird enough,* is their creed.

This fits in with the *Testament of Issachar,* which is also called the testament of singleness or simplicity: "*The Fifth Son of Jacob and Leah … He appeals for simplicity … When, therefore, I grew up, my children, I walked in uprightness of heart …And my father blessed me, for he saw that I walked in rectitude before him. And I was not a busybody in my doings … walking as I did in singleness of eye … The single-minded man coveteth not gold, he overreacheth not his neighbour, he longeth not after manifold dainties, he delighteth not in varied apparel … For he walketh in singleness of soul, and beholdeth all things in uprightness of heart … Keep, therefore … the law of God, and get singleness, and walk in guilelessness … love the Lord and your neighbour, have compassion on the poor and weak … and walk in the singleness of your father ... Know ye therefore, my children, that in the last times your sons will forsake singleness, and will cleave unto insatiable desire. And leaving guilelessness, will draw near to malice … and walk with men in singleness of heart.*"

In the light of all this it is noteworthy that the Amish and Mennonites trace their history back to Menno Simonsz (1496-1521), a Frisian Anabaptist reformer. Because he was persecuted in Friesland proper, he fled to East Friesland.

7th Clue: Issachar, knowledge of the times

"*And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had* ***understanding of the times****, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment*" (I *Chronicles* 12:32).

According to commentators, this understanding of the times had to do with the *mathematical* and *astronomical* knowledge of the Issacharites, which enabled them to make calendars and/or know the times.

Matthew Henry's Commentary: "*They were men of great skill above any of their neighbours, men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do. They understood the natural times, could discern the face of the sky, were weather-wise, could advise their neighbours in the proper times for ploughing, sowing reaping, etc. Or the ceremonial times, the times appointed for the solemn feasts; therefore they are said to call the people to the mountain (Deuteronomy 33:19), for almanacs were not then so common as now.*"

Because of their knowledge of the times, the second emblem of the tribe of Issachar is *sun & moon.* This emblem is used more often than the *donkey.*

Frisians traditionally have a feeling for arithmetic and mathematics; think of Eise Eisinga's Planetarium in Friesland, Wikipedia: "*The Royal Eise Eisinga Planetarium is an 18th-century orrery in Franeker, Friesland, Netherlands … The orrery was built from 1774 to 1781 by Eise Eisinga … The Eise Eisinga Planetarium is the oldest still working planetarium in the world. To create the gears for the model, 10,000 handmade nails were used. In addition to the basic orrery, there are displays of the phase of the moon and other astronomical phenomena.*"

Eise Eisinga was a Frisian who, through self-education, mastered *mathematics* and *astronomy.* He was not alone in doing this at the time.

My Frisian friend Jaap Heeringa is a former farmer (husbandry) who founded and leads the *Mo'adim Foundation.* Mo'adim – Hebrew for appointed times – advocates the celebration of Sabbaths, New Moons and Feasts of the Lord. Another good example of an Issacharite with an understanding of the times … to know what Israel ought to do.

8th Clue: trade & shipping

"*And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents.* ***They*** *shall call the people unto the mountain; there* ***they*** *shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for* ***they*** *shall* ***suck the abundance of the seas****, and of treasures hid in the sand*" (*Deuteronomy* 33:18-19).

Numerically the Frisians up north are not of great importance. Most of the Greater Frisians from the north have spread out over the rest of the country. I feel it is safe to say that the Dutch – except for the south – are in general descendants of two tribes, Zebulun and Issachar. In a way this mix is predicted by Moses. In a sense he has only 10 blessings. Simeon is not mentioned (*I will scatter them in Israel*, *Genesis* 49:7). Ephraim and Manasseh are together in Joseph's blessing and Zebulun and Issachar are together in Zebulun's blessing, hence the pronoun 'they.'

They will suck the abundance of the seas! This is a clear end-time prophecy. Both Zebulun and Issachar were landlocked tribes.

Eisinga's Planetarium

Frisians were so dominant in trade and shipping in the seventh and eighth centuries, that the North Sea was often called the Frisian Sea. The naming of the seas is also revealing. The Frisians called the sea north of them North Sea, south of them Zuyderzee (South Sea) and in front of Leeuwarden the Middelzee (Middle Sea).

Sucking the treasures hid in the sand applies to both tribes as well. Most of the natural gas and North Sea oil is under the lands and sea of the Greater Frisian realm. It is of great importance for the Dutch welfare state.

9th Clue: knowledge of the law

"*And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had* ***understanding*** *of the times, to* ***know*** *what Israel* ***ought to do****; the heads of them were two hundred …*" (I *Chronicles* 12:32).

One may well be good in arithmetic and mathematics, but the above verse also stresses that the Issacharites **knew** the times and **knew** what Israel **ought to do**. This of course is not possible without Torah knowledge, without knowledge of God's law.

That is why the rabbis have a second explanation of this verse saying that the Issacharites excelled in Torah knowledge, in knowledge of the **Law**. Sometimes this is portrayed by an emblem of an open book.

It is therefore interesting to see that there is quite a close connection between Frisians and laws: *Wikipedia*: "***Lex Frisionum****, the "Law Code of the Frisians," was recorded in Latin during the reign of Charlemagne, after the year 785, when the Frankish conquest of Frisia was completed by the final defeat of the Frisian king Radboud. The law code covered the region of the Frisians.*"

The Seven Frisian Sealands of the Middle Ages would come together at Aurich (East-Friesland) around Pentecost (Pentecost, the giving of the law!). There they would judge, discuss law for the Seven Frisian Sealands.

10th Clue: call the people unto the mountain

"***They*** [Zebulun & Issachar] ***shall call the people*** [peoples, JPS] ***unto the mountain***; there

they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness …" (*Deuteronomy* 33:19).
In biblical language a mountain often portrays a kingdom: "*And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains … And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD …*" (*Isaiah* 2:2-3).

The Low Countries (Zebulun & Issachar) have played a significant *religious* role over the past centuries. Just to name a few examples: Gerard Groote (1340-1384) was a Dutch preacher and founder of *the Brethren of the Common Life* and a key figure in the Devotio Moderna movement; Thomas à Kempis became a follower of the Modern Devotion in Deventer and wrote *The Imitation of Christ.* Wikipedia about the Imitation: "*The Imitation is perhaps the most widely read devotional work next to the Bible ... Apart from the Bible, no book has been translated into more languages than the Imitation of Christ.*"

Wikipedia about Erasmus: "*Erasmus … was a proponent of religious toleration … "Prince of the Humanists"; he has been called "the crowning glory of the Christian humanists".*"

There are many Dutch organisations which are not known in the Anglo-Saxon world. Suffice to mention the Frisian reformer Menno Simons (Mennonites); the Pilgrim Fathers who stayed in Leiden; Dutch evangelist Johan Maasbach; Anne van der Bijl, founder of *Open Doors*; Corrie ten Boom; Karel van Oordt, founder of *Christians for Israel*; etc.

Zondervan publications in Grand Rapids, USA, was founded (1931) by people with Dutch ancestry. Zondervan is a Dutch surname, dominant in the province of Friesland.

Shield of Zebulun and Issachar calling the nations unto the mountain (by my friend RAF Steinfort): The sailing boat is Zebulun's emblem and the sun and the moon is Issachar's. White is Zebulun's colour and black is Issachar's colour. The mountain signifies God's Kingdom. Some say that the two witnesses (*Revelation* 11) will be from the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar, calling the nations to repent, before the Second Coming.

BERT OTTEN

THANKS TO ALL OUR READERS

Three years ago the Editorial Team was delighted to be able to thank all our readers and contributors as we reached the end of the first volume of *The Covenant Nations*. With this issue we mark the end of Volume 2 and once again we would like to thank all of you who have continued to support this work and witness.

As we prepare for the next volume in 2014 we reproduce the closing thoughts of '**A word of Introduction to all our Readers**' from the very first issue in May 2007:

'May we dedicate ourselves to the spreading of this new publication far and wide as the Lord our God, the God of Israel, directs. A great awakening is coming in which His Righteousness will once again exalt the covenant nations in preparation for His Glorious Return.'

Let us take these words to heart and pray that this publication will indeed reach many more people with the message of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God as events intensify in the months ahead.

The Editorial Team

'This is a magnificent publication with quality material and photographs.'

'We enjoy reading the CN magazine and look forward to receiving each issue.'

'I do enjoy The Covenant Nations very much. The articles are so interesting. Keep up the good work, always in my prayers.'

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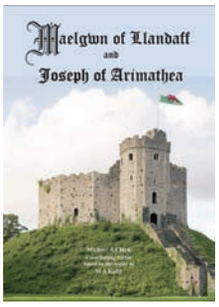

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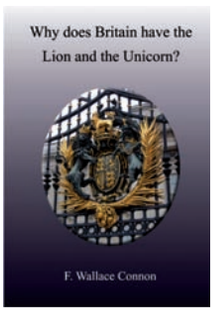

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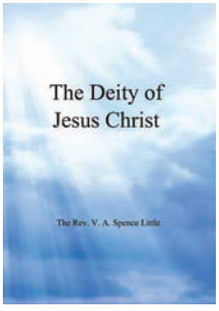

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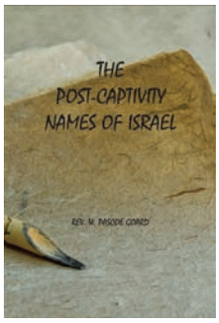

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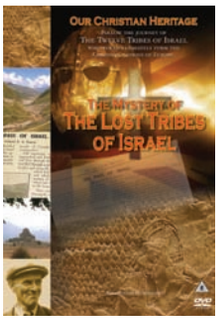

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